

Israel's Right to the Land

by Senator Jim Inhofe

A skillful presentation by U.S. Senator James Inhofe (R-Oklahoma) on the Senate floor, March 4, 2002.

<http://inhofe.senate.gov>

I was interested the other day when I heard that the de facto Saudi ruler, Crown Prince Abdullah, made a statement which was received by many in this country as if it were a statement of fact, as if it were something new, a concept for peace in the Middle East that no one had ever heard of before. I was kind of shocked that it was so well received by many people who had been down this road before.

I suggest to you that what Crown Prince Abdullah talked about a few days ago was not new at all. He talked about the fact that under the Abdullah plan, Arabs would normalize relations with Israel in exchange for the Jewish state surrendering the territory it received after the Six Day War, as if that were something new...

[But] there isn't anything new about the prospect of giving up land that is rightfully Israel's land in order to have peace. When it gets right down to it, the land doesn't make that much difference, because Yasser Arafat and others don't recognize Israel's right to any of the land. They do not recognize Israel's right to exist.

I will discuss seven reasons why Israel is entitled to the land they have and that it should not be a part of the peace process. If this is something that Israel wants to do, it is their business to do it. But anyone who has tried to put the pressure on Israel to do this is wrong.

We are going to be hit by skeptics who are going to say we will be attacked because of our support for Israel, and if we get out of the Middle East -- that is us -- all the problems will go away. That is just not true. If we withdraw, all of these problems will again come to our door. I have some observations to make about that.

But I would like to reemphasize once again the seven reasons that Israel has the right to their land.

1) ARCHEOLOGY

The first reason is that Israel has the right to the land because of all of the archeological evidence. All the archeological evidence supports it. Every time there is a dig in Israel, it does nothing but support the fact that Israelis have had a presence there for 3,000 years. The coins, the cities, the pottery, the culture -- there are other people, groups that are there, but there is no mistaking the fact that Israelis have been present in that land for 3,000 years. It predates any claims that other peoples in the region may have.

The ancient Philistines are extinct. Many other ancient peoples are extinct. They do not have the unbroken line to this date that the Israelis have. Even the Egyptians of today are not racial Egyptians of 2,000, 3,000 years ago. They are primarily an Arab people. The land is called Egypt, but they are not the same racial and ethnic stock as the old Egyptians of the ancient world.

The Israelis are in fact descended from the original Israelites.

2) HISTORY

The second proof of Israel's right to the land is the historic right. History supports it totally and completely. We know there has been an Israel up until the time of the Roman Empire. The Romans conquered the land. Israel had no homeland, although Jews were allowed to live there. They were driven from the land in two dispersions: One in 70 A.D. and the other in 135 A.D. But there was always a Jewish presence in the land.

The Turks, who took over about 700 years ago and ruled the land up until about World War One, had control. Then the land was conquered by the British. The Turks entered World War One on the side of Germany. The British knew they had to do something to punish Turkey, and also to break up that empire that was going to be a part of the whole effort of Germany in World War One. So the British sent troops against the Turks in the Holy Land.

One of the generals who was leading the British armies was a man named Allenby. Allenby was a Bible-believing Christian. He carried a Bible with him everywhere he went and he knew the significance of Jerusalem. The night before the attack

against Jerusalem to drive out the Turks, Allenby prayed that God would allow him to capture the city without doing damage to the holy places.

That day, Allenby sent World War One biplanes over the city of Jerusalem to do a reconnaissance mission. You have to understand that the Turks had at that time never seen an airplane. So there they were, flying around. They looked in the sky and saw these fascinating inventions and did not know what they were, and they were terrified by them.

Then they were told they were going to be opposed by a man named Allenby the next day, which means, in their language, "man sent from God" or "prophet from God." They dared not fight against a prophet from God, so the next morning, when Allenby went to take Jerusalem, he went in and captured it without firing a single shot.

The British government was grateful to Jewish people around the world, particularly to one Jewish chemist who helped them manufacture niter. Niter is an ingredient that was used in nitroglycerin which was sent over from the New World. But they did not have a way of getting it to England. The German U-boats were shooting on the boats, so most of the niter they were trying to import to make nitroglycerin was at the bottom of the ocean. But a man named Weitzman, a Jewish chemist, discovered a way to make it from materials that existed in England. As a result, they were able to continue that supply.

The British at that time said they were going to give the Jewish people a homeland. That is all written down in history. They were gratified that the Jewish people, the bankers, came through and helped finance the war.

The homeland that Britain said it would set aside consisted of all of what is now Israel and all of what was then the nation of Jordan -- the whole thing. That was what Britain promised to give the Jews in 1917. In the beginning, there was some Arab support for this action. There was not a huge Arab population in the land at that time, and there is a reason for that. The land was not able to sustain a large population of people. It just did not have the development it needed to handle those people, and nobody really wanted this land. It was considered to be worthless land.

Mark Twain -- Samuel Clemens -- took a tour of Palestine in 1867. This is how he described that land. We are talking about Israel now. He said: "A desolate country whose soil is rich enough but is given over wholly to weeds. A silent, mournful expanse. We never saw a human being on the whole route. There was hardly a tree or a shrub anywhere. Even the olive and the cactus, those fast friends of a worthless soil, had almost deserted the country."

Where was this great Palestinian nation? It did not exist. It was not there. Palestinians were not there. Palestine was a region named by the Romans, but at that time it was under the control of Turkey, and there was no large mass of people there because the land would not support them.

This is the report that the Palestinian Royal Commission, created by the British, made. It quotes an account of the conditions on the coastal plain along the Mediterranean Sea in 1913. The Palestinian Royal Commission said:

"The road leading from Gaza to the north was only a summer track, suitable for transport by camels or carts. No orange groves, orchards or vineyards were to be seen until one reached the Yavnev village. Houses were mud. Schools did not exist. The western part toward the sea was almost a desert. The villages in this area were few and thinly populated. Many villages were deserted by their inhabitants."

That was 1913.

The French author Voltaire described Palestine as "a hopeless, dreary place." In short, under the Turks the land suffered from neglect and low population. That is a historic fact. The nation became populated by both Jews and Arabs because the land came to prosper when Jews came back and began to reclaim it. If there had never been any archaeological evidence to support the rights of the Israelis to the territory, it is also important to recognize that other nations in the area have no longstanding claim to the country either.

Did you know that Saudi Arabia was not created until 1913, Lebanon until 1920? Iraq did not exist as a nation until 1932, Syria until 1941. The borders of Jordan were established in 1946 and Kuwait in 1961. Any of these nations that would say Israel is only a recent arrival would have to deny their own rights as recent arrivals as well. They did not exist as countries. They were all under the control of the Turks.

Historically, Israel gained its independence in 1948.

3) AGRICULTURE

The third reason that land belongs to Israel is the practical value of the Israelis being there. Israel today is a modern marvel of agriculture. Israel is able to bring more food out of a desert environment than any other country in the world. The Arab nations ought to make Israel their friend and import technology from Israel that would allow all the Middle East, not just Israel, to become an exporter of food. Israel has unarguable success in its agriculture.

4) HUMANITARIAN

The fourth reason I believe Israel has the right to the land is on the grounds of humanitarian concern. You see, there were 6 million Jews slaughtered in Europe during World War Two. The persecution against the Jews had been very strong in Russia since the advent of communism, and before then under the Czars.

These people have a right to their homeland. If we are not going to allow them a homeland in the Middle East, then where? What other nation on Earth is going to cede territory, is going to give up land?

They are not asking for a great deal. The whole nation of Israel would fit into my home state of Oklahoma seven times. They are not asking for a great deal. The whole nation of Israel is very small. It is a nation that, up until the time that claims started coming in, was not desired by anybody.

5) STRATEGIC ALLY

The fifth reason Israel ought to have their land is that she is a strategic ally of the United States. Whether we realize it or not, Israel is an impediment to certain groups hostile to democracies and hostile to what we believe in, hostile to that which makes us the greatest nation in the history of the world. They have kept them from taking complete control of the Middle East. If it were not for Israel, they would overrun the region.

They are our strategic ally. It is good to know we have a friend in the Middle East on whom we can count. They vote with us in the United Nations more than England, more than Canada, more than France, more than Germany -- more than any other country in the world.

6) ROADBLOCK TO TERRORISM

The sixth reason is that Israel is a roadblock to terrorism. The war we are now facing is not against a sovereign nation; it is against a group of terrorists who are very fluid, moving from one country to another. They are almost invisible. That is whom we are fighting against today. We need every ally we can get. If we do not stop terrorism in the Middle East, it will be on our shores.

One of the reasons I believe the spiritual door was opened for an attack against the United States is that the policy of our government has been to ask the Israelis, and demand it with pressure, not to retaliate in a significant way against the terrorist strikes that have been launched against them.

Since its independence in 1948, Israel has fought four wars: The 1948 War of Independence, the 1956 Sinai campaign, the 1967 Six Day War, and the 1973 Yom Kippur War. In all four cases, Israel was attacked. They were not the aggressor. Some people may argue that this was not true because they went in first in 1956, but they knew at that time that Egypt was building a huge military to become the aggressor. Israel, in fact, was not the aggressor and has not been the aggressor in any of the four wars.

Also, they won all four wars against impossible odds. They are great warriors. They consider a level playing field being outnumbered 2-to-1.

There were 39 Scud missiles that landed on Israeli soil during the Gulf War. Our president asked Israel not to respond. In order to have the Arab nations on board, we asked Israel not to participate in the war. They showed tremendous restraint and did not. Now we have asked them to stand back and not do anything over these last several attacks. We have criticized them. We have criticized them in our media. Local people in television and radio often criticize Israel, not knowing the true facts. We need to be informed.

I was so thrilled when I heard a reporter pose a question to Secretary of State Colin Powell. He said: "Mr. Powell, the United States has advocated a policy of restraint in the Middle East. We have discouraged Israel from retaliation again and again and again because we've said that it escalates the violence. Are we going to follow that ourselves?"

Mr. Powell indicated we would strike back. In other words, we can tell Israel not to do it, but when it hits us, we are going to do something.

But all that changed in December when the Israelis went into Gaza with gunships and into the West Bank with F-16s. With the exception of last May, the Israelis had not used F-16s since the Six Day War. And I am so proud of them because we have to stop terrorism. It is not going to go away. If Israel were driven into the sea tomorrow, if every Jew in the Middle East were killed, terrorism would not end. You know that in your heart. Terrorism would continue. It is not just a matter of Israel in the Middle East. It is the heart of the very people who are perpetrating this stuff. Should they be successful in overrunning Israel -- which they won't be -- but should they be, it would not be enough. They will never be satisfied.

7) BIBLICAL RIGHT

I believe very strongly that we ought to support Israel, and that it has a right to the land, because God said so. In Genesis 13:14-17, the Bible says: "The Lord said to Abram, 'Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are northward,

southward, eastward and westward: for all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed forever... Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it to thee."

That is God talking. The Bible says that Abram removed his tent and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar before the Lord. Hebron is in the West Bank. It is at this place where God appeared to Abram and said, "I am giving you this land" -- the West Bank. This is not a political battle at all. It is a contest over whether or not the word of God is true.

CONCLUSION

The seven reasons, I am convinced, clearly establish that Israel has a right to the land. Eight years ago on the White House lawn, Yitzhak Rabin shook hands with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat. It was a historic occasion. It was a tragic occasion. At that time, the official policy of the government of Israel began to be, "Let us appease the terrorists. Let us begin to trade the land for peace." This process continued unabated up until last year.

Here in our own nation, at Camp David in the summer of 2000, then-Prime Minister of Israel Ehud Barak offered the most generous concessions to Yasser Arafat that had ever been laid on the table. He offered him more than 90 percent of all the West Bank territory, sovereign control of it. There were some parts he did not want to offer, but in exchange he said he would give up land in Israel proper that the PLO had not even asked for.

And he also did the unthinkable. He even spoke of dividing Jerusalem and allowing the Palestinians to have their capital there. Yasser Arafat stormed out of the meeting. Why did he storm out of the meeting? Everything he said he wanted was offered there. It was put into his hands. Why did he storm out of the meeting? A couple of months later, there began to be riots, terrorism. The riots began when now-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon went to the Temple Mount. And this was used as the thing that lit the fire and caused the explosion. Did you know that Sharon did not go unannounced and that he contacted the Islamic authorities before he went and secured their permission to be there? It was no surprise.

The response was very carefully calculated. They knew the world would not pay attention to the details. They would portray this in the Arab world as an attack upon the holy mosque and use it as an excuse to riot. Over the last eight years, during this time of the peace process, where the Israeli public has pressured its leaders to give up land for peace because they are tired of fighting, there has been increased terror.

In fact, it has been greater in the last eight years than any other time in Israel's history. Showing restraint and giving in has not produced any kind of peace. It is so much so that today the leftist peace movement in Israel does not exist because the people feel they were deceived. They offered a hand of peace, and it was not taken. That is why the politics of Israel have changed drastically over the past 12 months. The Israelis have come to see that, "No matter what we do, these people do not want to deal with us... They want to destroy us."

That is why even yet today the stationery of the PLO still has upon it the map of the entire state of Israel, not just the little part they call the West Bank. They want it all.

We have to get out of this mindset that somehow you can buy peace in the Middle East by giving little plots of land. It has not worked before when it has been offered.

These seven reasons show why Israel is entitled to that land.

I yield the floor.

This article can also be read at: <http://www.aish.com/h/iid/48891682.html>

How Strong Is the Arab Claim to Palestine?

Summary ...

There is a myth hanging over all discussion of the Palestinian problem: the myth that this was Arab land taken from its native inhabitants by invading Jews.

- As a strictly legal matter, the Jews didn't take Palestine [sic] from the Arabs; they took it from the British, who exercised sovereign authority in Palestine under a League of Nations mandate for thirty years prior to Israel's declaration of independence in 1948. And the British don't want it back.
- If you consider the British illegitimate usurpers, fine. In that case, this territory is not Arab land but Turkish land, a province of the Ottoman Empire for hundreds of years until the British wrested it from them during the Great War in 1917. And the Turks don't want it back.
- If you look back earlier in history than the Ottoman Turks, who took over Palestine over in 1517, you find it under the sovereignty of the yet another empire not indigenous to Palestine: the Mamluks, who were Turkish and Circassian slave-soldiers headquartered in Egypt. And the Mamluks don't even exist any more, so they can't want it back.

So, going back 800 years, there's no particularly clear chain of title that makes Israel's title to the land inferior to that of any of the previous owners. Who were, continuing backward:

- The Mamluks, already mentioned, who in 1250 took Palestine over from:
- The Ayyubi dynasty, the descendants of Saladin, the Kurdish Muslim leader who in 1187 took Jerusalem and most of Palestine from:
- The European Christian Crusaders, who in 1099 conquered Palestine from:
- The Seljuk Turks, who ruled Palestine in the name of:
- The Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad, which in 750 took over the sovereignty of the entire Near East from:
- The Umayyad Caliphate of Damascus, which in 661 inherited control of the Islamic lands from
- The Arabs of Arabia, who in the first flush of Islamic expansion conquered Palestine in 638 from:
- The Byzantines, who (nice people perhaps it should go to them?) didn't conquer the Levant, but, upon the division of the Roman Empire in 395, inherited Palestine from:
- The Romans, who in 63 B.C. took it over from:
- The last Jewish kingdom, which during the Maccabean rebellion from 168 to 140 B.C. won control of the land from:
- The Hellenistic Greeks, who under Alexander the Great in 333 B.C. conquered the Near East from:
- The Persian empire, which under Cyrus the Great in 639 B.C. freed Jerusalem and Judah from:
- The Babylonian empire, which under Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. took Jerusalem and Judah from:
- The Jews, meaning the people of the Kingdom of Judah, who, in their earlier incarnation as the Israelites, seized the land in the 12th and 13th centuries B.C. from:
- The Canaanites, who had inhabited the land for thousands of years before they were dispossessed by the Israelites.

As the foregoing suggests, any Arab claim to sovereignty based on inherited historical control will not stand up. Arabs are not native to Palestine, but are native to Arabia, which is called Arab-ia for the breathtakingly simple reason that it is the historic home of the Arabs. The territories comprising all other "Arab" states outside the Arabian peninsula including Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria, as well as the entity now formally under the Palestinian Authority were originally non-Arab nations that were conquered by the Muslim Arabs when they spread out from the Arabian peninsula in the first great wave of jihad in the 7th century, defeating, mass-murdering, enslaving, dispossessing, converting, or reducing to the lowly status of dhimmitude millions of Christians and Jews and destroying their ancient and flourishing civilizations. Prior to being Christian, of course, these lands had even more ancient histories. Pharaonic Egypt, for example, was not an Arab country through its 3,000 year history.

The recent assertion by the Palestinian Arabs that they are descended from the ancient Canaanites whom the ancient Hebrews displaced is absurd in light of the archeological evidence. There is no record of the Canaanites surviving their destruction in ancient times. History records literally hundreds of ancient peoples that no longer exist. The Arab claim to be descended from Canaanites is an invention that came after the 1964 founding of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the same crew who today deny that there was ever a Jewish temple in Jerusalem. Prior to 1964 there was no "Palestinian" people and no "Palestinian" claim to Palestine; the Arab nations who sought to overrun and destroy Israel in 1948 planned to divide up the territory amongst themselves. Let us also remember that prior to the founding of the state of Israel in 1948, the name "Palestinian" referred to the Jews of Palestine.

In any case, today's "Palestine," meaning the West Bank and Gaza, is, like most of the world, inhabited by people who are not descendants of the first human society to inhabit that territory. This is true not only of recently settled countries like the United States and Argentina, where European settlers took the land from the indigenous inhabitants several hundred years ago, but also of ancient nations like Japan, whose current Mongoloid inhabitants displaced a primitive people, the Ainu, aeons ago. Major "native" tribes of South Africa, like the Zulu, are actually invaders from the north who arrived in the 17th century. India's caste system reflects waves of fair-skinned Aryan invaders who arrived in that country in the second millennium B.C. One could go on and on.

The only nations that have perfect continuity between their earliest known human inhabitants and their populations of the present day are Iceland, parts of China, and a few Pacific islands. The Chinese case is complicated by the fact that the great antiquity of Chinese civilization has largely erased the traces of whatever societies preceded it, making it difficult to reconstruct to what extent the expanding proto-Chinese displaced (or absorbed) the prehistoric peoples of that region. History is very sketchy in regard to the genealogies of ancient peoples. The upshot is that "aboriginalism" the proposition that the closest descendants of the original inhabitants of a territory are the rightful owners is not tenable in the real world. It is not clear that it would be a desirable idea even if it were tenable. Would human civilization really be better off if there had been no China, no Japan, no Greece, no Rome, no France, no England, no Ireland, no United States?

Back to the Arabs.

I have no problem recognizing the legitimacy of the Arabs' tenure in Palestine when they had it, from 638 to 1099, a period of 461 years out of a history lasting 5,000 years. They took Palestine by military conquest, and they lost it by conquest, to the Christian Crusaders in 1099. Of course, military occupation by itself does not determine which party rightly has sovereignty in a given territory. Can it not be said that the Arabs have sovereign rights, if not to all of Israel, then at least to the West Bank, by virtue of their majority residency in that region from the early Middle Ages to the present?

To answer that question, let's look again at the historical record. Prior to 1947, as we've discussed, Palestine was administered by the British under the Palestine Mandate, the ultimate purpose of which, according to the Balfour Declaration, was the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. In 1924 the British divided the Palestine Mandate into an Arabs-only territory east of the Jordan, which became the Kingdom of Trans-Jordan, and a greatly reduced Palestine Mandate territory west of the Jordan, which was inhabited by both Arabs and Jews.

Given the fact that the Jews and Arabs were unable to coexist in one state, there had to be two states. At the same time, there were no natural borders separating the two peoples, in the way that, for example, the Brenner Pass has historically marked the division between Latin and Germanic Europe. Since the Jewish population was concentrated near the coast, the Jewish state had to start at the coast and go some distance inland. Exactly where it should have stopped, and where the Arab state should have begun, was a practical question that could have been settled in any number of peaceful ways, almost all of which the Jews would have accepted. The Jews' willingness to compromise on territory was demonstrated not only by their acquiescence in the UN's 1947 partition plan, which gave them a state with squiggly, indefensible borders, but even by their earlier acceptance of the 1937 Peel Commission partition plan, which gave them nothing more than a part of the Galilee and a tiny strip along the coast. Yet the Arab nations, refusing to accept any Jewish sovereignty in Palestine even if it was the size of a postage stamp, unanimously rejected the 1937 Peel plan, and nine years later they violently rejected the UN's partition plan as well. When the Arabs resorted to arms in order to wipe out the Jews and destroy the Jewish state, they accepted the verdict of arms. They lost that verdict in 1948, and they lost it again in 1967, when Jordan, which had annexed the West Bank in 1948 (without any objections from Palestinian Arabs that their sovereign nationhood was being violated), attacked Israel from the West Bank during the Six Day War despite Israel's urgent pleas that it stay out of the conflict, and Israel in self-defense then captured the West Bank. The Arabs thus have no grounds to complain either about Israel's existence (achieved in '48) or about its expanded sovereignty from the river to the sea (achieved in '67).

The Arabs have roiled the world for decades with their furious protest that their land has been "stolen" from them. One might take seriously such a statement if it came from a pacifist people such as the Tibetans, who had quietly inhabited their land for ages before it was seized by the Communist Chinese in 1950. The claim is laughable coming from the Arabs, who in the early Middle Ages conquered and reduced to slavery and penury ancient peoples and civilizations stretching from the borders of Persia to the Atlantic; who in 1947 rejected an Arab state in Palestine alongside a Jewish state and sought to obliterate the nascent Jewish state; who never called for a distinct Palestinian Arab state until the creation of the terrorist PLO in 1964 sixteen years after the founding of the state of Israel; and who to this moment continue to seek Israel's destruction, an object that would be enormously advanced by the creation of the Arab state they demand. The Arab claim to sovereign rights west of the Jordan is only humored today because of a fatal combination of world need for Arab oil, leftist Political Correctness that has cast the Israelis as "oppressors," and, of course, good old Jew-hatred.

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